

February 9, 2023

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Rebecca Cohen and I am a Clinical Psychologist who was born, currently resides, and works in New Haven, CT.

I stand in support of HB 6616 Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 26 regardless of immigration status as an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 26; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage.

As a psychologist, I currently provide mental health treatment to youth and families throughout the state. I formerly worked in community health settings and provided trauma treatment to populations speaking English, Spanish, and Portuguese for over ten years. I have been fortunate to also serve people who are of undocumented immigrant status. Through this work I have come to know the intimate, personal stories of trauma and resilience as people made impossible decisions to care for their families. I also worked with the children who were brought here at very young ages by parents fleeing trauma in their home countries. I have witnessed first-hand the ongoing trauma that children and families face by feeling the need to live in secret and cobble together resources that are not readily provided to them despite working tremendously hard and contributing to our communities and society. I have seen how this serves as a barrier to treatment as people are afraid that seeing medical or mental health care will lead to their undocumented status being discovered. I have also seen the strength, the skill, and the talent of young folks excited about their futures yet worried that they may not have the same opportunities to go to college as their peers who are US citizens. I believe that healthcare is a right that we all deserve. It is not a privilege dependent upon our citizenship status. We all deserve to live happy, healthy, full lives. Creating and expanding access to medical and mental health services and helping people to feel safe and welcome to access these services is fundamentally important.

I support HB 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all community members in CT regardless of age or status.

Thank you for your time,

*Rebecca Cohen, Psy.D.*

Rebecca Cohen, PsyD  
Clinical Psychologist  
Owner, Stable Grounds Therapy